

# MOZART:

played by **RALPH KIRKPATRICK**

on a reconstruction of an  
eighteenth-century piano  
built by John Challis.

**Sonata in B flat (K. 570)**

**Fantasy & Fugue in C major (K. 394)**

**Suite in C major (K. 399)**

Bartók Records



# MOZART: SONATA (K. 570), SUITE (K. 399), FANTASY & FUGUE (K. 394)

Played by RALPH KIRKPATRICK

The SONATA IN B FLAT (K. 570) was written in Vienna in 1789. Since the end of the eighteenth century it has also been known as a sonata for piano and violin, but, in the opinion of Einstein the violin part is not by Mozart. In any case, the sonata for solo pianoforte appears to represent the original. The first movement is a masterpiece of changing moods within a concentrated, economical form. The remaining two movements are far less tightly knit, consisting of enchainments of separate ternary sections and rondo-like restatements, with brief transitions and codas. They lack the distant modulations and the obvious unity of tonal scheme that give an unbroken span to the entire first movement. It is the player's task to hold these movements together: the first movement holds itself together. It is also the player's task to seize the hair-fine nuances of feeling and the almost operatic contrasts of character with which all these movements are filled.

If I were to be asked what would be my greatest ambition as a Mozart player, I should reply: "Life-size Mozart." It is so easy, in looking at Mozart from the dizzy cliffs of nineteenth-century instrumental sound, to see it as through the wrong end of an opera glass. And in holding in check the enormous resources of the modern grand piano it is easy to give the impression of walking tiptoe, lace-beruffled, on eggs. On the other side, habits of over-inflated sound and unceasing overstatement can lead to a notion of Mozart as a kind of colossus, unsuccessful perhaps because of his early death in reaching the proper size. (As a harpsichordist I am often grateful for the privilege of being able to look forward to Mozart from the other side of the eighteenth century, with fresh perceptions of his contribution to music, rather than like most of us, backwards at him through a haze of Beethoven.)

One advantage (among many disadvantages) of the eighteenth-century piano is that it is designed for life-size Mozart. Its limited dynamic range defeats the colossal, and the sensitivity of its color permits the delineation of human characteristics in their true proportion, in much the same way that a small opera-house will permit the life-size perception of nuances of characterization and interplay of feeling that go entirely unnoticed in a larger hall, where the personages from a distance resemble pigmies whose only salvation is to pretend that they are giants.

Both the unfinished SUITE (K. 399) and the C major FANTASY & FUGUE (K. 394) reflect the belated influence on Mozart of Handel and Bach. On April 20, 1782, Mozart wrote to his sister, sending her the Fantasy and Fugue: "—herewith I am sending you a Prelude and a three-voiced fugue. . . . I had already composed the fugue and wrote it down while I was thinking out the Prelude, . . . The reason for this fugue coming into the world is really my dear Konstanze.—Baron van Swieten, to whom I go every Sunday gave me all Handel's and Bach's works (after I had played them through for him) to take home with me.—when Konstanze heard the fugues she fell in love with them . . . and would not stop urging me until I composed a fugue for her, . . ."

Both the Suite and the Fantasy & Fugue I find curiously moving works. Like Beethoven, in his archaizing moods Mozart endows an externally stiff and academic set of patterns with a kind of other worldliness, a transfigured songfulness and sublimity. The fugue subjects are inflexible

by comparison with Bach; in fact they sound more like Padre Martini than Bach or Handel. The episodes of all the pieces modulate with a dangerous non-Bachian, non-Handelian frequency that would smack of late eighteenth-century, nineteenth-century academicism, were not the pieces as a whole suffused with that same glow of tenderness and vitality as Mozart's other works. Even were they to be considered as mere academic exercises (perish the thought!), these pieces would demonstrate Mozart's chronic inability in later life to be other than a great composer.

The Suite pays homage to Handel particularly in the Courante and in the external style of the Overture, although the modulations are not exactly Handelian. Most Handelian of all the movements would have been the Sarabande, which breaks off in Mozart's manuscript after five bars. The Allemande I find predominantly Italianate, particularly the reiterated fragments reminiscent of Domenico Scarlatti. I am enchanted by the learned eloquence of the unprepared dissonant appoggiaturas in the inner voices, of the same kind that appear in the countersubject of the C major Fugue.

One of my happiest musical recollections is that of first learning the C major Fantasy at the old Walter piano in the collection of Dr. Ulrich Ruch in Nurnberg, an exact duplicate of Mozart's own piano now in the Mozart house in Salzburg. This piece for me is one of the most mysterious and arresting of Mozart's works in his later style. If the Fugue pays homage to J. S. Bach, surely this fantasy evokes many reminiscences of the fantasies of C. P. E. Bach. In my opinion it quite surpasses even the most beautiful C. P. E. Bach's works. Although Mozart's letter implies that he composed this Fantasy away from the keyboard, such a piece gives us an idea of the miraculous manner in which he must have improvised thousands of such pieces at the piano. In the same letter quoted above, Mozart writes about the Fugue: "—I have marked it *Andante maestoso* on purpose, so that people won't play it too fast . . ." Like the rest of the Fugue, the closing chords bear no indication of dynamics. In view of the atmosphere of "Erhabenheit" which pervades the whole piece, I am unable to conceive them otherwise than *pianissimo*.

## The Eighteenth-Century Piano

The piano of Mozart's time retained a direct kinship with the harpsichord and clavichord, almost all of which has since been lost. From the harpsichord it got its thin wiry tone and its susceptibility to precise rhythmic declamation and fine contours of line. From the clavichord it took flexibility of nuance and a fingertip sensibility for alterations of color. The piano of Mozart's time has a certain acidity in the *forte* as contrasted with a possible *dolce* in the *piano*, that Mozart frequently turned to intense and dramatic effect in his keyboard writing. After having played much on Mozart's own piano and its duplicates, as well as many other examples of early Viennese and English pianos, I cannot help feeling that the modern piano has become far less personal in tone. In a coarse sense it is easier to manage, but the Mozart piano, although its treacherous action is always skating on the edge of harshness and thinness, has a sensitivity of linear nuance that has been utterly lost to piano building since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In the last sixty years the modern piano has achieved a certain kind of stagnant perfection, but at the expense of qualities that sometimes threaten to justify the admittedly imperfect instruments of the eighteenth century against it.

The instrument used in these recordings has not been copied from a specific model, but rather combines various features from English and Viennese pianos of the late eighteenth century, with a view to the complete lack of standardization then of pianos and of the requirements for piano tone. In this respect, Mr. Challis's piano is not an historical instrument, but rather an historical interpretation.

The manner of playing the piano in Mozart's time was inherited from the close finger touch recommended for the harpsichord by Couperin, Rameau and Bach's disciples (later for the piano by Mozart's pupil, Hummel), without which, moreover, any control of clavichord tone is impossible. The high finger technic, now often associated with the performance of eighteenth-century music, originated later.

On Mozart's piano, knee levers operated in a fashion corresponding to our *una corda* and damper pedals. One advantage of the early system, as I can testify from personal experience, is that the knee lifted in what would correspond to excessive use of the damper pedal renders the leg subject to perceptible cramps, from which modern pianists are unfortunately immune.

(For an authoritative account of Mozart's use of eighteenth-century keyboard instruments, the curious listener is referred to Nathan Broder's article on "Mozart and the 'Clavier'" in the *Musical Quarterly* for October 1941. There it is demonstrated that although most of Mozart's published keyboard works from about 1778 up to the end of his life were designated for the harpsichord or the pianoforte, Mozart himself was playing the pianoforte most of the time after 1777.)

Notes by Ralph Kirkpatrick

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**BARTÓK RECORDS**

**MOZART**

**SONATA IN Bb Major K. 570**

BAND 1: ALLEGRO

BAND 2: ADAGIO

BAND 3: ALLEGRETTO

9 1 2

played by  
**RALPH KIRKPATRICK**

PB 039

**LONG PLAYING 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  RPM MICROGROOVE**

PB 039

**BARTÓK RECORDS**

MOZART

Band 1: SUITE K. 385-I

OVERTURE  
ALLEMANDE  
COURANTE

Band 2: FANTASY AND FUGUE IN C MAJOR K. 383-A

9 1 2

played by  
RALPH KIRKPATRICK

PB 040

LONG PLAYING 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  RPM MICROGROOVE

CPB 040